

**FEAR OF THE
LORD
[PSALM 34:11-14]**

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WE MUST “FEAR” GOD

- If you study the Bible, there is no mistaking the repeated commands to "fear" God (**Ecc. 12:13; 1 Pet. 2:17**). But what exactly does it mean to fear the Lord?
- The Proverbs and Psalms provide a great amount of information in answering what it means to fear the Lord. Consider several definitions the Bible provides:
 - "***You who fear in the Lord, trust in the Lord***" (Psalm 115:11a).
 - "***Blessed is every one who fears the Lord, who walks in His ways***" (Psalm 128:1).
 - "***The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge***" (Prov. 1:7a).
 - "***The fear of the Lord is to hate evil***" (Prov. 8:13a).
 - "***By the fear of the Lord one departs from evil***" (Prov. 16:6b).

THE INTENT OF PSALM 34

In Psalm 34:11-14, the Psalmist provides a very clear picture of what it means to fear God. In fact, the Psalmist's very intention is teach people how to fear the Lord:

- ¹¹ Come, O children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the Lord.*
- ¹² What man is there who desires life
and loves many days, that he may see good?*
- ¹³ Keep your tongue from evil
and your lips from speaking deceit.*
- ¹⁴ Turn away from evil and do good;
seek peace and pursue it.*

KEEP YOUR TONGUE FROM EVIL

- First, to fear God, the Psalmist says a person must keep his tongue from evil (v.13).
 - The admonition to control our tongues is still required under Jesus's New Testament law (Matt. 12:36; Eph. 4:29).
- The tongue is evil and poisonous (James 3:8).
 - Therefore, the tongue must be bridled because "***what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person***" (Matt. 15:11).
 - If we do not bridle our tongues, we do not truly fear God and our "***religion is worthless***" (James 1:26).
- Specifically, the Psalmist warns we must guard against the temptation of speaking deceit (v.13), which Peter also condemns in 1 Pet. 3:10-11.
- We must only allow truth to come out of our mouths (Eph. 4:15; 1 Pet. 4:11; Prov. 17:20; Rev. 21:8).

TURN AWAY FROM SIN

- Second, with v.14, it is clear that a healthy fear of God includes turning away from sin (see also Prov. 16:6; 2 Chron. 7:14).
 - Today, turning from sin (repentance) is required of every person in order to be saved (Luke 13:3,5; 2 Pet. 3:9; Acts 17:30-31).
- However, the Psalmist shows that simply turning away from sin is not enough; a person must then “**do good**” and actively desire to “**see good**” (v.14, 12).
 - The law of Christ makes this exact same demand (Gal. 6:9-10; Matt. 5:16; Eph. 2:10; Heb. 13:16; 2 Thess. 3:13).
 - If we are not busy doing good works, then our faith is dead and useless (James 2:14-26), and the judgment day will not go well for us (Matt. 25:31-46).

SEEK PEACE

- Finally, to fear God involves seeking peace (v.14).
 - The Law of Christ makes the same demand (Rom. 12:18, 14:19; Heb. 12:14).
- We all should desire peace since Christ said, "***Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God***" (Matthew 5:9).
- Ultimately, true peace is only found through Christ (John 14:27; Eph. 6:23-24).
 - We must let this peace rule in our hearts (Col. 3:15), not anxiety (Phil. 4:6), discontentment (Jude 16), anger (Gal. 5:19-21), or division (Rom. 16:17).
- If we actively pursue and obtain peace, then we will be "***godly and dignified in every way***" (1 Tim. 2:2) and the Lord will bless us (v.8-10) and we live joyous lives (v.12).

CONCLUSION

- Paul told the Corinthians, "***Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God***" (2 Cor. 7:1).
 - God is to be feared (Heb. 12:28-29), and our holiness is completed, or perfected, by our fear of Him (see also Deut. 17:19; 1 Sam. 12:14).
 - Our fear of God motivates us to obey Him and spread the gospel (Psalm 55:19; Heb. 4:1; Phil. 2:12; 2 Cor. 5:10-11).
 - Yet, fear of God is not merely being scared of punishment, but also exhibiting awe (Neh. 1:5; Luke 7:16; Jonah 1:9; Deut. 28:58) and reciprocating His love (Psalm 86:15, 18:1; 1 Pet. 1:8-9; 1 John 3:1; 4:7, 10, 19).
- We must not be like those described as having "***no fear of God before their eyes***" (Psalm 36:1; Rom. 3:18). We must fear God, for, truly, this is the whole duty of man.